

Letters Endorsing the FY 2008 Military Construction/Veterans Affairs Appropriations Bill

- The American Legion
- Joint Press Release from AMVETS, Disabled American Veterans, Paralyzed Veterans of America, and Veterans of Foreign Wars
- Paralyzed Veterans of America
- Disabled American Veterans
- AMVETS
- Military Officers Association of America
- Association of the United States Army
- National Association for Uniformed Services

The American Legion



OFFICE OF THE
NATIONAL COMMANDER

★ WASHINGTON OFFICE ★ 1608 "K" STREET, N.W. ★ WASHINGTON, D.C. 20006 ★
(202) 263-2986 ★

June 7, 2007

Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker
US House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi:

I want to take this opportunity to thank you and some of your colleagues for the leadership demonstrated on behalf of America's veterans with regard to funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for FY 2007 and FY 2008.

The significant funding increases in VA medical care in the continuing resolution for FY 2007 in February came at an important time as VA faced an uncertain fiscal picture. Appropriations Committee Chairman Dave Obey, Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman Chet Edwards, Budget Committee Chairman John Spratt, and others fulfilled a promise to increase VA funding in FY 2007.

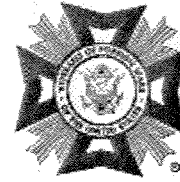
This same leadership team also realized that the budget request for emergency defense supplemental appropriations did not include increased funding to address additional costs in both military and VA medical care funding for those brave men and women returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. The \$1.8 billion identified for veterans' health care addressed the true on-going and often overlooked cost of war.

The Appropriations Military Construction, Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies Subcommittee appropriations markup reflected an impressive commitment to this nation's service members, veterans, and their families. This measure being sent to the full Committee reflects funding levels recommended by The American Legion and the vast majority of the veterans' community.

The American Legion appreciates your commitment to funding these programs that are important to America's veterans and members of the military.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Paul A. Morin".
PAUL A. MORIN
National Commander



For more information, contact: Joe Chenelly, AMVETS, 301-683-4035
David Autry, Disabled American Veterans, 202-314-5219
David J. Uchic, Paralyzed Veterans of America, 202-416-7667
Joe Davis, Veterans of Foreign Wars, 202-608-8357

Veterans Funding Increase Praised

WASHINGTON, May 24—Draft legislation to boost funding for veterans programs to \$87.7 billion next year is being hailed as a major victory by organizations representing millions of America's former defenders.

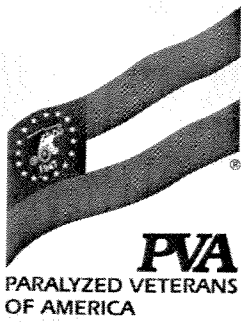
The \$109.2 billion bill crafted by the House Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Subcommittee provides \$43.29 billion in discretionary funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs. "This represents a significant, much-needed investment in health care and the benefits delivery system for our nation's sick and disabled veterans," according to AMVETS, Disabled American Veterans, Paralyzed Veterans of America and Veterans of Foreign Wars.

The four veterans' service organizations said the bill provides a \$6 billion increase in VA health care funding, exceeding their own recommendation by \$294 million. "This is the first time that lawmakers have surpassed our recommendations in the 21 years that we have been publishing *The Independent Budget*," the groups noted. The bill also funds the VA biomedical research program at \$480 million, as recommended in *The Independent Budget*, an increase of \$68 million over the 2007 funding level.

In addition to the increase for veterans medical care and construction projects, the bill includes enough funding for the VA to hire more than 1,000 new employees to tackle a large backlog of almost 640,000 disability compensation claims. Cutting the backlog would reduce the time veterans must wait for a decision on their benefits, which averages 177 days for an original claim and more than two years for initial appeals.

"The proposed increase in VA funding is a recognition that caring for our veterans is a continuing cost of national security and a willingness to provide the resources to meet those needs," the groups said. They praised Subcommittee Chairman Chet Edwards (D-Texas) for his leadership in crafting the measure, as well House Budget Committee Chairman John Spratt (D-S.C.), Appropriations Committee Chairman David R. Obey (D-Wis.) and Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) for their support of additional funding for veterans programs.

The Independent Budget provides the nation's decision-makers a veterans' perspective on federal spending and national policy priorities for veterans programs. These recommendations are well-considered policy and funding proposals based on the actual needs of the men and women these programs were created to serve. As a comprehensive, authoritative policy document, *The Independent Budget* focuses on funding recommendations for veterans health care, benefits



June 12, 2007

The Honorable Chet Edwards
Chairman
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Military Construction and Veterans' Affairs
2369 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Edwards:

On behalf of *The Independent Budget*, Paralyzed Veterans of America would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your unwavering support of our nation's sick and disabled veterans.

We particularly appreciate your efforts as Chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction and Veterans' Affairs to achieve a historic funding level for discretionary spending for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for FY 2008. For the first time in the 21 year history of *The Independent Budget*, many of our funding recommendations have been matched or exceeded.

It is absolutely essential that the VA be provided the level of resources included in the FY 2008 Military Construction and Veterans' Affairs appropriations bill and approved by your Subcommittee recently. This critical funding will finally allow the VA to adequately address the health care needs of the men and women who have served and sacrificed in defense of this country. It will also allow the VA to begin effectively addressing the rapidly growing claims backlog.

Once again, we thank you for your tireless efforts on behalf of veterans. We look forward to working with you and all members to ensure that the Military Construction and Veterans' Affairs appropriations bill is approved by the full House.

Sincerely,

Carl Blake
National Legislative Director
Paralyzed Veterans of America

Chartered by the Congress of the United States

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May 23, 2007

The Honorable Chet Edwards
Chairman, Subcommittee on Veterans Affairs,
Military Construction and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
House of Representatives
2369 Russell House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

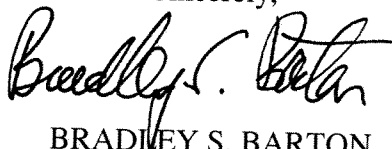
Dear Mr. Chairman:

On behalf of the 1.4 million members and auxiliary of Disabled American Veterans (DAV), an organization that I am honored and proud to lead, I want to thank you and the Members of your Subcommittee for keeping the faith with America's veterans in the vote you took this week on the Veterans Affairs, Military Construction and Related Agencies Appropriations Act for 2008.

I am especially pleased about your decision to press forward with more staff resources to enable the Veterans Benefits Administration to finally begin addressing the stymied backlog of benefits claims applications. Also, your conviction to fully fund VA health care has been borne out in the generous increase you passed for the Veterans Health Administration. While we still intend to devote ourselves to securing reforms in the discretionary appropriations system used to fund VA, we thank you for using it this year to accomplish a great deal of progress for America's sick and disabled veterans.

Mr. Chairman, on behalf of all of those who care for veterans, especially veterans who have been wounded in war, I thank you for your good works on their behalf. We at DAV stand ready to aid you in gaining final Congressional passage of this crucial bill.

Sincerely,



BRADLEY S. BARTON
National Commander



**SERVING
WITH
PRIDE**



A M V E T S

NATIONAL
HEADQUARTERS
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Lanham, Maryland
20706-4380
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E-MAIL: amvets@amvets.org

June 11, 2007

Chet Edwards, Chairman
House Subcommittee on Appropriations
on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies
H-143 The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Edwards:

AMVETS would like to thank you for increasing funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) in the Committee mark of the FY 2008 Military Construction, Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies appropriations bill.

AMVETS fully supports the \$87.7 billion funding recommendation for FY 2008. This funding level is a significant increase of \$6.7 billion over FY 2007 levels, and is approximately \$3.8 billion more than the President's FY 2008 request. AMVETS urges the full House to act expeditiously and favorably on this legislation.

Mr. Chairman, your funding recommendation for the department is significant - it reinforces to veterans, their families and the nation of your commitment to veterans. Overall, AMVETS believes these funding levels will ensure VA will be able to serve America's veterans and their families with dignity and compassion, and that the department will successfully continue to be their principal advocate in ensuring they receive medical care, benefits, social support, and other crucial services.

Equally important, this level of funding will ensure that returning veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan will continue to receive priority health care and other VA services. Adequate VA funding is a significant concern for young veterans and this issue was highlighted at the AMVETS "National Symposium for the Needs of Young Veterans" that was held in Chicago, Illinois in October 2006. Overall, more than 500 veterans, active duty and National Guard and reserve personnel, family members, and others who care for veterans examined the growing needs of our returning veterans.

Again, AMVETS would like to thank you for increasing funding for VA in the Committee's FY 2008 Military Construction, Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies mark. We urge for its adoption by the full House.

Sincerely,

James B. King
National Executive Director



VADM Norbert R. Ryan, Jr. USN (Ret)
President

June 6, 2007

The Honorable Chet Edwards
Chairman, Subcommittee on Military Construction and Veterans' Affairs
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Edwards:

On behalf of the 362,000 members of The Military Officers Association of America (MOAA), I want to take this opportunity to express our deepest appreciation and gratitude for your unwavering support of our nation's military men and women, especially our wounded warriors, disabled veterans and survivors.

We particularly appreciate your efforts as Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Military Construction and Veterans' Affairs in endorsing \$43.2 billion for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for FY 2008, an increase of \$3.8 billion over the President's request and \$6.7 billion over FY 2007 spending. For the first time in the 21 year history of *The Independent Budget*, many of its funding recommendations have been matched or exceeded. MOAA has long been a proud endorser of *The Independent Budget*.

It is absolutely essential that the entire House of Representatives favorably endorse the resources included in the full Committee on Appropriations favorable vote of your Subcommittee's blueprint for VA spending. This extraordinary level of funding gives the VA vital resources to adequately address the health care needs of the men and women who have served and sacrificed in defense of our nation. It also will allow the VA to expand its efforts to effectively tackle the enormous and rapidly growing claims backlog.

As the nation again pauses to reflect on the sacrifices of our heroes who stormed the beaches of Normandy in World War II, we urge all members of the House to honor and support a new generation of heroes by passing the VA appropriation for FY 2008 as endorsed by your Subcommittee and the full Committee on Appropriations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Norbert Ryan Jr.", written in a cursive style.



ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY

2425 Wilson Boulevard, Arlington, Virginia 22201-3385 • (703) 841-4300

General Gordon R. Sullivan
United States Army (Ret.)
President

11 June 2007

The Honorable Chet Edwards
Chairman, Subcommittee on Military
Construction and Veterans' Affairs
House Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Edwards:

On behalf of the Association of the United States Army, I write to thank you for your unwavering support of our nation's military men and women, especially our wounded warriors, disabled veterans, and survivors.

We particularly appreciate your efforts as Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Military Construction and Veterans' Affairs in endorsing \$43.2 billion for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for FY 2008, an increase of \$3.8 billion over the President's request and \$6.7 billion over FY 2007 spending.

The House of Representatives must endorse the funding level included in the full Committee on Appropriations. This extraordinary level of funding gives the VA vital resources to adequately address the health care needs of the men and women who have served and sacrificed in defense of our nation. It also will allow the VA to expand its efforts to effectively tackle the enormous and rapidly growing claims backlog.

The Association of the United States Army urges all members of the House to honor and support a new generation of heroes by passing the VA appropriation for FY 2008 at the level approved by the full Committee on Appropriations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gordon R. Sullivan".
GORDON R. SULLIVAN
General, USA Retired

GRS/WBL/rmw



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR UNIFORMED SERVICES

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"The Servicemember's Voice in Government"
Established 1968



June 6, 2007

The Honorable Chet Edwards
Chairman,
Subcommittee on Military Construction and Veterans Affairs
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

On behalf of our nearly 200,000 members and supporters, the National Association for Uniformed Services, an endorser of *The Independent Budget*, thanks you for your determined leadership in bringing together an appropriations bill that addresses the needs of military construction and veterans affairs.

The National Association for Uniformed Services commends and endorses your effort to establish a new direction in veterans health care and benefits programs to meet the needs of returning veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan and make up for past shortfalls in veterans funding.

Our heroes deserve the priority attention you have given in providing the resources necessary to deliver quality healthcare and entitlement programs to our veterans. The fiscal year 2008 appropriations will have a positive impact on the lives of hundreds of thousands of people who have dedicated their lives to serving our country, and I want you to know we appreciate your leadership.

We urge your colleagues to recognize and support the priority course you are taking to fully fund the programs that serve the brave men and women who have made incredible sacrifices so that this country might live in a safe, free and secure Nation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rick Jones".

RICHARD A. JONES
Legislative Director
National Association for Uniformed Services